HOW TO GUIDE:

COLD AND FLU PREVENTION

BUNZL

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Outbreak Prevention

Colds, flu and other viral outbreaks don't just affect people's health and wellbeing. They impact employee productivity, facility reputation and, in the case of the flu, can also result in death.

Cost of flu to Canadian business: over $1 billion annually.

If you manage the environmental team in a facility of any kind, (institutional, educational, athletic, assisted living, commercial, etc.), you know that preventing disease outbreaks is a critical responsibility. By using best practice processes and procedures along with the latest technology and innovation, you can be confident that the highest standards of cleanliness are being maintained – and so can those who use your facility every day.

This comprehensive guide to preventing and containing cold and flu outbreaks walks through the latest products, procedures and equipment to prevent and contain the spread of harmful bacteria and viruses to maintain good building health.

Influenza 101

Influenza, or flu, is a respiratory disease that has been around for centuries. It has claimed between 340 million and 1 billion human lives throughout history (1).

Even today the flu kills between an estimated 250,000 and 500,000 people every year.

The first recorded flu epidemic occurred in Europe during the 14th century (2). Though we've since learned to understand and handle flu infections better, it's not a disease we've learned to cure. Our best defense is vaccination, which people are encouraged to get every year. This is a preventative measure and its effectiveness varies from person to person, season to season and from flu strain to flu strain.

There are three main strains of human influenza: A, B and C. Each type has different subtypes and strains. Some are more prevalent in certain winters, largely due to specific seasonal conditions and the natural infectious spread of the strain amongst people.

2000-8000: Average number of Canadians who die from the flu* every year.

*(*and associated complications)*

In Canada, millions of people are affected by the flu every year, due to its highly contagious nature. It attacks the nose, throat and lungs and is particularly threatening to the elderly, children and those with underlying health conditions.

IN THIS GUIDE

In fact, it is estimated that between 2,000 and 8,000 Canadians die from the flu – or associated complications such as pneumonia – each year (3).

The trouble with the flu is that it spreads like hair from a shedding dog! It also prefers to hang out in the same warm, dry areas that we do in winter. Its ability to spread easily onto surfaces and then quickly from human to human means that flu in shared spaces can be a recipe for disaster.

The worst-case scenario is when those spaces are high traffic areas where surfaces are constantly touched and re-touched by dozens, hundreds or even thousands of hands. An outbreak within any sort of communal area is highly likely as soon as just one person or surface is infected!

24 HOURS:
Time that viruses live on hard surfaces.

It takes just one person to spread flu germs and put hundreds of others at risk. The associated staff absenteeism, lost productivity and business closures can result in significant financial losses. Worse, vulnerable residents of assisted living facilities succumb to the disease each year.

Preventing minor outbreaks from becoming large scale, facility-wide events has been very difficult – until now.

All it takes is ONE to infect hundreds of other people.

Signs or Symptoms

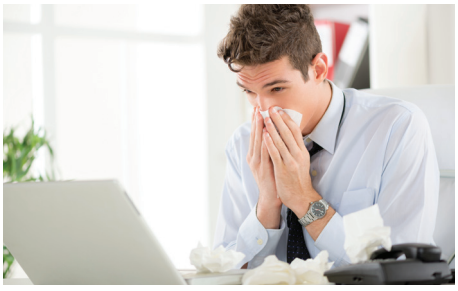
Knowing how to prevent the flu and what to do if an outbreak occurs is essential, but it's also critically important to understand how to identify the flu in the first place. People with the flu often think they have a bad cold, and that misconception can expose many people to the virus before there is a chance to prevent the spread.

When someone starts exhibiting one or more of these symptoms, it's important that they are isolated to not only speed their recovery but prevent others from becoming infected. And, just like Mom always said, getting "plenty of rest and plenty of fluids" is key! Typically, an individual struck by the flu will bear the brunt of the illness for five to seven days. During this time, depending upon the severity of the flu, they may be bed bound for three to four days and need to stay at home for a week or more. Once the symptoms have all but disappeared, they are well enough to return to work without further aggravating the condition. Although the chance of spreading the illness will be all but gone, rigorous handwashing and avoiding handshakes is extremely important!

IS IT A COLD? OR IS IT THE FLU?

Top 12 tell-tale signs of the flu that you and your employees should be aware of include:

1. Fatigue
2. Sneezing
3. Runny nose
4. Chills
5. Sweats
6. Watery eyes
7. Muscle aches
8. Headaches
9. Cough
10. Sore throat
11. Fever
12. Loss of appetite



The Cost of Colds and Flu

No one likes the idea of getting a cold, or worse, the flu, but people are not the only ones who suffer. Business does, too. The Canadian Healthcare Influenza Network estimates that about 1.5 million workdays are lost every year in Canada because of the flu alone (4). This results in estimated healthcare costs and lost productivity to the tune of around $1 billion annually, severely impacting individuals, families, small businesses, large corporations and the economy as a whole.

A flu outbreak in work environments can be tricky. In today's workplace, employees are faced with the choice of going to work or staying home when they suspect they are coming down with the flu. While public health officials and doctors strongly advise that employees should stay out of the workplace to rest, recover and prevent the spread of the virus, many feel pressure to go to work anyway. Ironically, those that do so when clearly suffering from colds and flu make their condition worse, infect their co-workers and can substantially reduce productivity for several weeks. For both the employee and the company, it's a lose-lose situation.

An Ounce of Prevention

Preventing an outbreak is far better than trying to contain one. Infection control is the best way to prevent viral outbreak such colds or flu. It involves many different components, but the primary ones include education, preparation and consistent best practices.

Best practices in infection control are based on the principle of treating every person as if they were already infected:

Environmental Hygiene: Ensuring a location is appropriately cleaned and sanitized using recognized cleaning procedures and solutions, followed by electrostatic disinfecting. This is particularly important in shared areas such as washrooms and staff kitchens. High contact points such as door handles, phones etc. are critical areas to keep sanitized. Regular garbage disposal is also important.

Personal Hygiene: It is imperative that basic personal hygiene provisions are always available for staff, customers, students, visitors etc. Toilet paper, anti-bacterial soap and paper towels are compulsory. Hand sanitizer should also be a high priority supply.

Barriers: For relevant tasks, staff (cleaning, food service, etc.) must be provided with gloves, masks and other barriers. Everyone should also have ready access to tissues and be encouraged (via signage, etc.) to cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing. Keeping clothing clean is advisable and wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) where appropriate is essential.

Healthcare: Employees should see a healthcare professional as early as possible if suffering from symptoms which could be deemed beyond an everyday cold. Communicating this to staff is important.

Food Safety/Food Hygiene: This area is absolutely critical to outbreak prevention. Ideally disposable cups, plates and cutlery are used by staff and if they are not used all staff must be advised to ensure they wash their re-useable items thoroughly. All food should be kept in air tight containers, or in sealed conditions, in fridges or freezers.

Quarantine/Isolation: There can be a lot of stigma around staying at home when ill in some workplaces. In fact, three out of four workers claim they must go into work even if they are sick (5). This is a recipe for an illness outbreak! Managers should instead encourage team members to work from home if they are able, or rest and recover if they are not.

It's in Your Hands

One of the most powerful ways to stop the spread of infection and thus an outbreak is the simplest: proper and consistent handwashing. This is a message that should be communicated as an expectation to all staff and visitors on an ongoing basis – not just during cold and flu season!

Here are a few tips on how to increase handwashing throughout your facility:

1. Encourage all who frequent your facility, be they staff, customers, students, etc., to wash their hands on entering and leaving the facility. Provide hand sanitizer units at doors to provide a visual cue and convenient option.

2. Encourage handwashing:
   a. After coming in physical contact with another individual. That brings us to the tricky subject of handshakes – one of the most common ways of spreading germs! If people don't feel comfortable declining a handshake, they should be sure to wash hands or use hand sanitizer as quickly as possible afterwards
   b. Before and after coming in contact with food
   c. Before and after wearing gloves of any kind
   d. After using the toilet
   e. When they are visibly dirty or feel dirty
   f. After blowing one's nose
   g. After coming in contact with common area surfaces such as door handles and elevator buttons

3. Publish a handwashing guide, and re-issue annually at the start of cold and flu season!

Be Prepared

An outbreak can happen anywhere, any time. When you, your business and your staff are adequately prepared, you can minimize a negative impact to the greatest extent possible. Good preparation includes ensuring adequate supplies are on hand, staff know what to do and you have a clear plan of action to follow in order to contain an outbreak, should one occur. Each business's plan of action, sometimes known as an emergency or outbreak plan, will vary depending on the size, nature of facility and degree of public exposure.

THE RIGHT WAY TO WASH HANDS

1. Wet hands thoroughly with warm water.
2. Apply soap and lather, rubbing hands together very firmly and covering every surface area, especially under the nails. (It's best to use an anti-bacterial liquid soap).
3. Thoroughly scrub all the areas covered in soap for a minimum of 20 seconds.
4. Rinse hands until free of all dirt and soap.
5. Dry hands, preferably using paper towels.
6. Turn off taps with paper towels before discarding.
7. If available, use hand sanitizer on exiting a washroom to disinfect hands that may have touched doors, etc. on the way out.

Coordination, team work, communication and involving the right stakeholders are critical in developing your plan. Staff such as: housekeeping, cleaners, healthcare, food service workers and administration all have a role to play. While this level of communication between internal team members is essential, reaching out to your local health authority to seek guidance can be helpful, too.

In short, being prepared means ensuring you can quickly detect an outbreak, then contain it with the right procedures, supplies and communications.

Keep it Clean!

Maintaining a high standard of facility cleanliness is crucial in order to stop the spread of germs. That means regular and thorough cleaning of all common areas, which must be done correctly to be effective.

Training

Ensuring staff are well trained is key. They should learn how to properly disinfect an area, eradicate unwanted materials, such as dirt, and dispose of garbage. Surfaces like door handles, window latches, shared computers, taps, sinks, light switches, seats, phones, toilet handles and slide show pointers are among the most important items to clean in common areas.

Fabrics

Special attention should be given to the way different types of surfaces, particularly furniture, should be cleaned. Consult your Bunzl Cleaning and Hygiene representative and refer to the manufacturer's guidelines for the best way to disinfect upholstered surfaces.

Bodily Fluids

Cleaning bodily fluids can put facility maintenance staff at risk! For that reason, environmental workers must be well-trained on some specific protocols. Here are some brief summaries of the equipment and processes required to correctly clean biohazard spills on counters, tile and carpeted floors. The personal protection equipment required for each type of spill clean-up is similar: all require gloves, an N95 mask and goggles (or shield). Clean-up for large spills on carpet and tile floors also requires staff to wear masks, gowns, booties.

SMALL BIOHAZARD SPILL: Counter

CLEANING PROCESS:

1. Secure spill area, gather equipment and put on PPE.
2. Apply disinfectant solution to affected area.
3. Absorb biohazard spill with paper towel and clean until all solids are removed.
4. Dispose of paper towel in red biohazard bag.
5. Re-apply disinfectant solution and ensure you allow proper contact/ dwell time for the disinfectant.
6. Dispose of paper towel in red biohazard bag.
7. Remove PPE.
8. Wash hands thoroughly.

EQUIPMENT REQUIRED:

- ✓ **RTU bottle of disinfectant solution (preferably with flip cap)**
- ✓ **Absorbent disposable paper towels**
- ✓ **Biohazard bag**

LARGE BIOHAZARD SPILL: Tile Floor

CLEANING PROCESS:

1. Secure area with wet floor signs.
2. Gather required equipment and put on PPE.
3. Use absorbent granules to solidify the bodily fluids.
4. Drain the disinfectant solution over the spill, without contacting the surface.
5. Use counter brush and dust pan to remove solids and dispose of in biohazard bag.
6. Drain the disinfectant solution over the spill area.
7. Mop up the spill.
8. Take the second mop bucket and mop head and apply fresh disinfectant solution to the entire area, while ensuring to allow proper contact/dwell time for the disinfectant.
9. Dispose of contaminated disinfectant solution and clean and disinfect all cleaning equipment.
10. Remove PPE.
11. Wash hands thoroughly.

EQUIPMENT REQUIRED:

- ✓ **Wet floor signs**
- ✓ **Absorbent granulars**
- ✓ **Dust pan and counter brush**
- ✓ **Two buckets, wringers and mops with disinfectant solution**
- ✓ **Biohazard bag**

LARGE BIOHAZARD SPILL: Carpet Floor

CLEANING PROCESS:

1. Secure area with wet floor signs.
2. Gather equipment and put on PPE.
3. Drain the disinfectant solution onto the spill without contacting the carpet surface.
4. Extract up the biohazard spill and disinfectant solution.
5. Drain the disinfectant solution onto the spill area a second time, and allow proper contact/dwell time for the disinfectant.
6. Extract up the disinfectant solution.
7. Dispose of contaminated disinfectant solution and clean and disinfect all equipment.
8. Remove PPE.
9. Use odour absorbent granules to eliminate odours from the spill.
10. Wash hands thoroughly.

EQUIPMENT REQUIRED:

- ✓ **One bucket, wringer and mop with disinfectant solution**
- ✓ **Wet floor signs**
- ✓ **Carpet extractor**

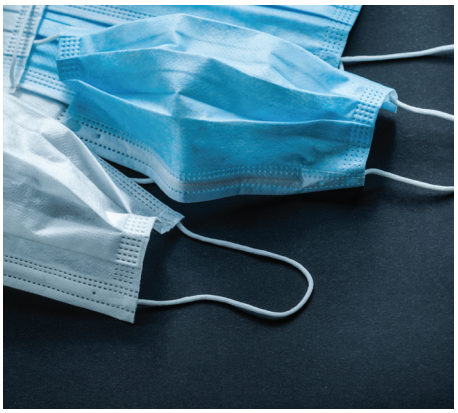
What to Look For

In order to identify an outbreak you should look for a higher than usual number of cases of an illness in a particular setting or group. What are the usual numbers? What are the symptoms? All members of staff, particularly managers, should be aware of the possibility of an outbreak when the number of people reporting a similar illness, or exhibiting similar symptoms, reaches a certain level.

The ability to detect outbreaks early provides a far better chance of containing them. Reports of higher than normal rates of staff absenteeism or complaints of client/customer illnesses should raise a red flag. If the rate of illness is 10% or higher it should trigger the implementation of a containment plan. Schools have varying rates of illness to trigger a closure, but a study from the Children's Hospital Boston found 10% to be the recommended benchmark (6).

Your local health authority typically collects and analyzes data from a variety of sources on an ongoing basis in order to identify the potential for outbreaks, the nature of those outbreaks, and the recommended protocols for prevention and containment. In fact, some diseases are required by law to be reported to local Public Health Units by healthcare professionals, hospitals and laboratories. Maintaining lines of communication with these bodies is highly advisable.

When an increase in the number of clients, staff or volunteers with similar health complaints becomes apparent, arrangements should be made as quickly as possible for those that are sick to seek medical attention so that professional assessments can be made and findings reported.



You're Faced with an Outbreak. Now What?

If you've got a confirmed outbreak in your facility, don't panic – act, and quickly. Once an outbreak has been declared, begin to manage it with a well-designed Containment Plan. This includes **infection control measurements**, which are used primarily to contain the spread.

IS IT REALLY AN OUTBREAK?

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- **Who's sick?**
- **What are the signs or symptoms?**
- **Have they seen a healthcare professional? If so, what was the diagnosis?**
- **How many others are sick?**
- **What is the severity?**
- **Are they being treated?**

KEY OUTBREAK INDICATOR:

10% + staff members demonstrate similar symptoms.

SURVEILLANCE/DATA COLLECTION:

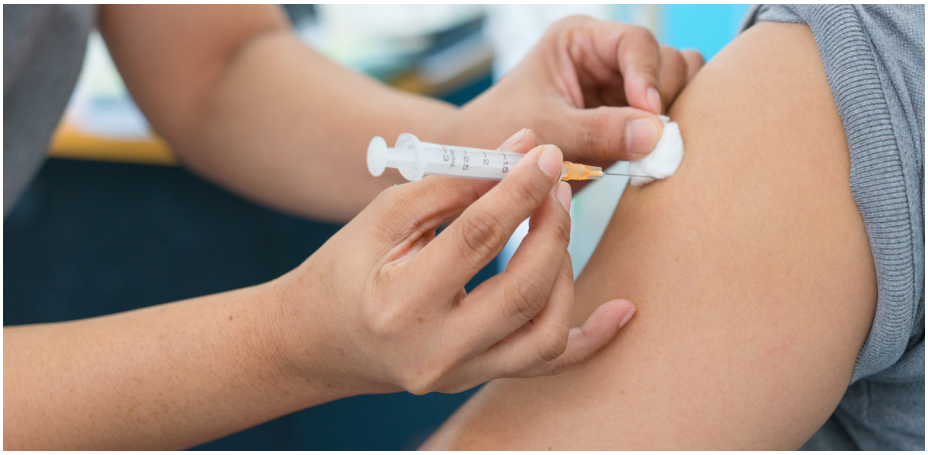
A higher-than-average number of people suffering from shared symptoms. Refer to your local health authority for communication and specific guidance. If symptoms include vomiting and diarrhea then you should report it in case it has stemmed from a common food source.

YOUR 12-POINT CONTAINMENT PLAN:

1. Acknowledge (declare) you have an outbreak.
2. Contact your local health authority to report the outbreak and seek guidance.
3. Confirm the nature of the outbreak.
4. Institute environmental control measures. One of the most important control measures involves enhanced environmental sanitation in high traffic areas, bathrooms, handrails, door handles, etc., followed by electrostatic disinfecting.
5. Communicate protocol with people throughout the facility.
6. Monitor and survey those who are ill.
7. Ensure those affected are isolated and receiving appropriate treatment.
8. Identify those who have been in contact with people who are ill and others who may be at risk and provide specific instructions, which may include medication, immunization and isolation or quarantine.
9. Take further action to prevent outbreaks. For example, provide educational materials to staff/clients/residents, provide or encourage appropriate vaccinations or medications, implement regular testing, etc.
10. Declare the outbreak over once the infection rate has dropped below 10%.
11. Communicate findings and institute revised prevention measures if appropriate.
12. Reflect on the experience overall and improve detection, prevention and containment processes for the future.

A Team Effort

Individuals and organizations have a responsibility to prevent cold and flu outbreaks. Individuals must be responsible for good personal hygiene to reduce their risk of exposure to germs that cause the flu and to prevent the spread of germs. Organizations must take the responsibility to reduce the capacity for germs to exist and spread within their facilities



One important preventative measure individuals can take is to get a flu shot. This is particularly important for those with vulnerable immune systems. Recent studies have shown that flu vaccinations reduce the risk of flu illness by between 40-60% among the overall population during seasons when most circulating flu viruses are well-matched to the flu vaccine (7).

One of the most powerful ways to prevent outbreaks is to add electrostatic disinfecting to your cleaning protocol. Liquid disinfectant is applied to a surface using an electrostatic applicator, in which it is atomized into droplets. These are charged by an electrical current as they exit the applicator. When the charged droplets approach the target surface area, they induce an opposite charge on it, which in turn attracts the charged droplets to the surface. The charged droplets also repel each other, preventing them from forming larger droplets and allowing them to uniformly cover a surface. The charged droplets are even attracted to the backs of surfaces, regardless of the direction of spray, enabling them to 'wrap around' a wide range of surface types, from tables, desks and washroom fixtures to intricate surfaces such as keyboards.

The advantage of electrostatic technology is that it disinfects all surface areas – virtually impossible using manual cleaning methods. The **Clorox® Total 360®** system, available exclusively from Bunzl

Canada, is widely used in institutional, educational, commercial and professional athletic facilities across the country.

When it comes to preventing cold and flu outbreaks, there is no silver bullet.

However, with the right products, tools and advanced technologies you can give your organization the best possible chance to win the battle against cold and flu season this year!

For more information about preventing cold and flu and the industry-leading products and technology you need to keep your facility healthy and productive, **contact us today!**

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